

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ! Federal Agency Name(s): Office of Ocean Exploration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- ! Funding Opportunity Title: NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration (OE) Announcement of Opportunity, Fiscal Year 2006
- ! Announcement Type: Initial Announcement
- ! Funding Opportunity Number: OAR-OE-2006-2000346
- ! Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s): 11.460 - Special Oceanic and Atmospheric Projects
- ! Dates: Applications for this FY06 Announcement of Opportunity will be accepted within three separate categories: General Exploration, Marine Archaeology, and Education. To ensure that your application will be considered in the FY06 solicitation, it must be received by the dates listed below. Pre-proposals are required for all categories and should be received by August 5, 2005. Pre-proposals are a prerequisite for submission of a full proposal. Full proposals are required for all categories and should be received by October 3, 2005. Applicants who submit a Pre-proposal by August 5, 2005, will receive an email encouraging or discouraging a full proposal submission by August 19, 2005. Applications submitted after the above dates will not be guaranteed consideration.
- ! Application Submission: Pre-proposals are required for all categories and must be submitted as a paper application to: ATTN: PROPOSAL MANAGER, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, 301-713-9444. For full proposals, applicants are **strongly encouraged** to apply online (<http://www.grants.gov/>) but paper submissions to the address above are acceptable if there is no internet access available. No email or facsimile pre-proposals will be accepted.
- ! Funding Opportunity Description: OE is seeking pre-proposals and full proposals to support its mission, consistent with NOAA's 5-year Research Strategic Plan ([http://www.nrc.noaa.gov/Docs/NOAA\\_5-Year\\_Research\\_Plan\\_010605.pdf](http://www.nrc.noaa.gov/Docs/NOAA_5-Year_Research_Plan_010605.pdf)), to search, investigate, and document unknown and poorly known areas of the ocean and Great Lakes through interdisciplinary exploration, and to advance and disseminate knowledge of the ocean environment and its physical, chemical, biological, and marine historical resources. Typically OE proposals are relatively high-risk, innovative and interdisciplinary in their approach and objectives. OE is soliciting proposals whose objectives fall within one of three different categories: General Exploration, Marine Archaeology, and Education. NOAA OE anticipates that approximately \$14,000,000, including costs for ship and submersible assets will be available through this announcement. Submissions focusing solely on technology development will not be

accepted. Total funding estimates are: General Exploration \$13,000,000; Archaeology \$600,000 and Education \$400,000. Applicants are encouraged to visit the Ocean Explorer Website (<http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>) to familiarize themselves with past and present OE-funded activities. The application kit will be accessible at: <http://www.explore.noaa.gov/opportunity/welcome.html>

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program & Notice Objective

The OE Program engages in interdisciplinary ocean exploration of unknown and poorly known areas of the world's oceans in support of NOAA's 5-year Research Strategic Plan. The OE program objectives are to explore and map the ocean's living and nonliving resources and to gain new insights about its physical, chemical, biological, and archaeological characteristics. Information about past and present OE-funded activities is available through the Ocean Explorer Website at: <http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>.

The purpose of this announcement is to invite the submission of pre-proposals and full proposals that address specific thematic priorities.

#### B. Program Priorities & Guidance

In FY06, OE is seeking interdisciplinary proposals for collaboration that address one of these thematic priorities:

##### 1. General Exploration

- a. Habitat and ecosystem characterization;
- b. Marine life inventories contributing to Census of Marine Life (CoML);
- c. Ocean mapping;
- d. New ocean resources including biotechnology and mineral exploration;

##### 2. Marine Archaeology;

##### 3. Education

These thematic priorities are consistent with NOAA's 5-year Research Strategic Plan ([http://www.nrc.noaa.gov/Docs/NOAA\\_5-Year\\_Research\\_Plan\\_010605.pdf](http://www.nrc.noaa.gov/Docs/NOAA_5-Year_Research_Plan_010605.pdf)) and were established in part from the 2000 President's Panel on Ocean Exploration (<http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/websites/retiredsites/oceanpanel.pdf>); eight regional NOAA-hosted ocean exploration workshops (<http://www.explore.noaa.gov/workshops/welcome.html>) and a 2003 National Academy Report, Exploration of the Seas.

Interdisciplinary expeditions are an important aspect of NOAA's Ocean Exploration Program and investigators submitting General Exploration proposals are encouraged to include one or more of the following activities in their proposal:

- Surveys areas using multibeam, sidescan sonar, or other sea floor or water column mapping technologies;
- Development of real-time maps and 3-D computer simulations from survey data;
- Collection of oceanographic observations using CTD or other instruments;
- Collection of sediment samples;
- Visual surveys using HOVs, ROVs or AUVs;
- Collection of discrete samples of specific deep-sea benthic and pelagic biota at targeted locations;
- Deployment of in-situ instrumentation at select locations to explore in the time domain.

In FY06, pre-proposals and full proposals to OE must be applicable to one of the following three categories: General Exploration; Marine Archaeology, and Education. In addition to funding the scientific studies, OE is committing substantial ship and submersible assets for the FY06 AO. (See Assets Section below).

1. General Exploration. Proposals in this category should be interdisciplinary with scientists from multiple fields engaging in expeditions to explore the physical, chemical, biological and geologic domains of unknown or little known ocean areas. Collaborations are strongly encouraged among scientists to submit a single proposal for an expedition. Specific thematic priorities with General Exploration are:
  - Habitat and Ecosystem Characterization. OE is interested in characterization of unknown or little known pelagic and benthic habitats. Of special interest are deep-sea corals, sponges and chemosynthetic communities. This program activity provides a foundation for NOAA and others to build a body of knowledge for better understanding of biogeography of species, recruitment patterns, habitat function, and natural and anthropogenic impacts.
  - Marine life Inventories contributing to Census of Marine Life (CoML). Initiated in 2000, CoML is a ten-year international program focused on three grand challenges: (1) What did live in the ocean? (2) What lives in the ocean now? (3) What will live in the ocean of the future? The OE Program is interested in exploration focusing on census-related projects targeting present-day oceans (i.e. the second grand challenge) in unknown or little known ocean and Great Lakes areas. Proposals are encouraged that describe and quantify species population, diversity, distribution, and life history at site-specific to regional scales. A plan for archiving the samples in the CoML database, Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS), should be included in the proposal. More information on CoML can be found at (<http://www.coml.org>).
  - Ocean Mapping. OE encourages interdisciplinary proposals that have a mapping component focused on habitat, bathymetric and/or physical, chemical, and geological phenomenon (e.g. deep ocean currents, chemical and/or heat plumes from hydrothermal vents or other ocean phenomenon). Habitat mapping includes low resolution (>10m) surveys of areas that have never been surveyed, and/or high resolution (<10m) surveys of new areas or areas that have only been surveyed at low resolution.

- New Ocean Resources. OE is interested in identifying and mapping new living and nonliving resources in unknown or little known ocean areas. Focus areas may include, but are not limited to, natural products for biotechnology or pharmaceutical application or new hydrate or seep ecosystems. A collection plan, including repository for the samples, should be included.

Total funding for the General Exploration category in FY06 is estimated at \$13,000,000.

2. Marine Archaeology. Proposals should focus on the initial phases of marine archaeology – discovery, investigation and inventory –and use methods to locate survey and evaluate sites for archaeological or historical significance. OE traditionally supports shipwreck, aircraft and submerged landscape projects within U.S. state and federal waters, though it may sponsor significant maritime heritage projects holding a unique place in American or human history, wherever they may be found.

Though OE does not directly manage submerged historical or cultural resources, the program supports cultural resource management programs within NOAA, federal, state and foreign government agencies. Proposals are encouraged to include appropriate resources management partners, when possible, to demonstrate that the long-term protection of the resources is being considered.

Total funding for the Marine Archaeology category in FY06 is estimated at \$600,000.

3. Education. In response to the 2000 President's Panel on Ocean Exploration Report and the NOAA Strategic Plan, the NOAA OE Office produced a curriculum entitled *Learning Ocean Science through Ocean Exploration*. Developed for use in professional development for teachers of Grades 6-12, the OE curriculum includes lesson plans developed from NOAA expeditions. Curriculum themes progress from physical science through earth science to biological and environmental science. By combining the Ocean Explorer Web site (<http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>) into the curriculum, teachers and students have a direct connection to the scientists whose work they are modeling in the classroom and to new discoveries from OE expeditions. The curriculum is available online at: (<http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/edu/curriculum/welcome.html>).

NOAA is seeking to extend the use of OE education material through the National Science Education Standards-based curriculum in school districts and other learning centers throughout the country. Education submissions should consider at least one of the following areas to effectively integrate the OE curriculum and companion CD/Web site into teaching and learning:

- District-wide professional development for teachers in the use of the curriculum and NOAA Ocean Explorer Companion CD/Web;
- School-wide team-based development for teachers in the use of the OE curriculum;
- Integration of institutions of higher learning with teachers of Grades 6-12 in use of the curriculum;

- Integration of the curriculum and NOAA Ocean Explorer Companion CD/Web site into after-school/summer programs.
- Other novel projects that extend the use of the curriculum and companion CD-ROM at the local, state and/or regional level.

An emphasis should be placed on working with traditionally underserved/underrepresented groups. Summative evaluation and demographic data collection from expeditions are required. Interested applicants are encouraged to review the 2004 NOAA Education Plan, found at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/>, and the NOAA Ocean Explorer Web site at: <http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>.

Total funding for the Education category is estimated at \$400,000, with no single award exceeding \$50,000.

#### Ship and Submersible Assets.

The OE Program anticipates that the following assets will be available for expeditions. If your application is crafted to use these resources, please do not include the cost of these assets in your budget request.

- R/V SEWARD JOHNSON and Johnson-Sea-Link submersible (HBOI): 55 days: Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean
- R/V MELVILLE (Scripps) and possibly an ROV: 40 days: western Pacific
- R/V THOMPSON (UWA) and possibly an ROV: 30 days: western Pacific
- R/V KoK and PISCES submersible (HURL): 30 days: Hawaiian Archipelago
- R/V RONALD H. BROWN (NOAA): 30 days: Atlantic and Caribbean
- R/V NANCY FOSTER (NOAA): 30 days: Atlantic
- R/V HI'IALAKAI (NOAA): 14 days: Hawaiian Archipelago

If requesting assets not listed here, please ensure that those assets are available and identify where the asset will be located prior to the requested time period.

OE encourages submissions that either: a) have already acquired a vessel for conducting the project; or b) represent an exploratory project that will be conducted as part of an existing research cruise. If you require funding for such assets, please be sure to include these costs as part of your proposed budget. If you do not require funding, please be sure to account for such costs as "cost share" in your budget.

The OE Program also anticipates reserving time with other ROVs and AUVs that could be made available to support particular projects. However, the Program encourages submissions that have already identified and acquired such assets.

#### Geographic Areas of Particular Interest:

Polar Projects in support of the International Polar Year 2007-2008. OE is accepting interdisciplinary submissions for deep-sea exploration in both the Arctic and Antarctic regions during the 2006, 2007 and 2008 field seasons. The FY06 funding will focus on

the Arctic but proposals targeting either polar region will be considered. OE anticipates having access to an icebreaker and/or an ice-strengthened ship and submersible (ROV/HOV/AUV). Final assets will be arranged based on the proposals recommended for funding. Applications for an add-on exploratory complement to an existing polar research cruise will also be considered. Potential geographic areas of interest include, but are not limited to, deep basins, seamounts and ridge systems. In collaboration with NOAA's Arctic Research Office and the NOAA's National Undersea Research Program's West Coast and Polar Region Undersea Research Center, OE is particularly interested in proposals targeting the Pacific Arctic region. International and/or Federal government collaboration is strongly encouraged. For further information regarding this opportunity, please contact Jeremy Potter at 301-713-9444 x136.

C. Program Authority: 33 U.S.C. 883d

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

In anticipation of the FY06 President's Budget, OE expects to support approximately 40 awards (including ship time) through this solicitation. Proposals funded through the FY05 Announcement of Opportunity, excluding ship time or submersible costs, ranged from approximately \$20,000 to \$500,000. The OE Director may hold over select proposals submitted for FY06 funding into FY07 or FY08 consideration for logistical or funding reasons.

The OE Program anticipates funding other proposals selected in the FY05 Broad Agency Agreement of the National Ocean Partnership Program (NOPP) and a joint FY06 Solicitation of the Minerals Management Service (MMS) and NOAA under the auspices of MMS.

The amount of funding available through this announcement will be dependent upon the final FY06 appropriation. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate all or any part of the available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to initiate research activities where funding has been recommended by OE. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Future opportunities for submitting proposals may be available and will be dependent on OE funding levels.

### B. Project/Award Period

Although one to three-year proposals will be accepted for program review, the present principal focus of the OE program will be on one and two year projects. Applications must include a scope of work and a budget for the entire award period. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 120-150 days after the NOAA appropriation. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in proposed research activities.

If an application is selected and approved for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide additional funding in connection with the project in subsequent years. Multi-year requests may be funded in their entirety or on an annual basis. OE may 1) fund year one only

and require applicants to submit a full proposal in later years; 2) fund year one and provide out-year funding contingent upon factors including successful accomplishment of prior-year objectives as well as availability of program funding and other relevant resources, but not requiring an applicant to resubmit a full proposal; or 3) fund all years in year one.

#### C. Type of funding instrument

Proposals selected for funding from non-Federal applicants will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement under the terms of this notice. Proposals selected for funding from NOAA scientists will be funded through an intra-agency transfer. Proposals selected for funding from a non-NOAA Federal agency will be funded through an inter-agency transfer. For applications funded through cooperative agreements, substantial involvement of the federal government may include, but is not limited to, activities such as specifying direction or redirection of the scope of work due to inter-relationships with other projects or stipulating that the recipient must meet or adhere to specific procedural requirements before subsequent stages of a project may continue.

#### D. Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine the environmental impact of a proposal under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

### III. Eligibility Information:

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are from institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, state, local and Indian tribal governments. Applications from federal agencies are also eligible. *Please Note:* Before non-NOAA federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from applicants, the Economy Act (31 USC 1535) is not an appropriate legal basis.

#### B. Cost Sharing

Though cost-sharing is not required, it is encouraged (see Evaluation Criterion 4, AProject Cost" under Section V.B of this notice).

#### C. Funding Requirements



By receiving funding from OE, all applicants agree to the following expectations for sample collection, education and outreach, data management and website requirements. To help meet these requirements, one or more NOAA staff may become members of the at-sea science party serving roles as Data Managers or Web Coordinators.

1. Sample Collection. For expeditions that don't collect living and/or nonliving samples, the OE Program may request that samples be taken from especially unique places. For any request, the Program will work with the expedition to ensure that the sampling does not interfere with the overall objectives of the expedition.

2. Education & Outreach. All funded applicants and collaborators shall cooperate with OE in facilitating education and outreach activities associated with scientific proposals. This may include participation in the development of lesson plans, professional development for teachers, accommodation of a teacher/educator-at-sea, participation in a media event or press conference to describe the expedition and its findings, at-sea media participation, and support for student tours of the research vessel and interaction with scientists in shipboard labs. Science-based exploration proposals need not craft a specific education and outreach component, although creativity is encouraged on behalf of the applicant. The OE program will assess and provide an appropriate education and/or outreach activity in collaboration with the applicant.

3. Data Management. The 2000 Report from the President's Panel on Ocean Exploration called for a federal program that promotes data management and dissemination so that discoveries can result in a maximum and immediate benefit. To implement this recommendation each applicant shall meet the following data management requirements:

- a. Recipients will provide metadata, e.g., number and type of data, and description of the data collected, in a manner defined by NOAA, within 30 days of completion of a project cruise. All biological data collected from expeditions are to be submitted to a U.S. Regional Node of the Oceanographic Information System (OBIS) (<http://www.iobis.org>) which is the data distributed system for the Census of Marine Life (CoML). Scientists will need to contact a U.S. OBIS technical representative and negotiate an agreement on methodology, format, and documentation for data archiving, including subscription to the OBIS Schema or the Darwin Core Version 2, or other acceptable provider approach. Other data or data products may also be requested at the discretion of the OE Director for administrative, scientific, or educational use. All such requests will be developed in full collaboration with the applicant.
- b. Recipients will provide OE and the public access to acquired data sets and associated products as soon as practical and, in no case, later than two years following the completion of the cruise unless an extension is specifically granted by OE.
- c. The OE Program with support from the NOAA Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS) has developed an Expedition Information System (EIS) for collecting metadata and select data sets for a subset of funded



cruises. For these cruises, the OE Program will provide an OE Data Manager to participate during the mission, collecting information with the EIS. Note that this system will help the applicant generate summary materials that can be included in required reports.

NOAA's Ocean Explorer Website (<http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>) is the principal vehicle for chronicling and documenting all missions supported by NOAA and OE. Mission participants may be required to provide information pre-, during, and post-cruise for this site such as cruise tracks; preliminary bathymetry; characterization of data collected; photographic or other images from the mission; and be available to participate in interviews, essays, or written materials. The OE Program will provide an OE Web Coordinator to work with the applicant and science party to determine the content of the Web offering, and to develop and implement a Web production plan. (See Ancillary Information at: <http://www.explore.noaa.gov> for more details about this requirement).

#### D. Potential Partners

OE anticipates and encourages investigators to seek complementary funding for their proposed projects through linked proposals to other agencies, both internal and external to NOAA. Other federal agencies of the National Ocean Partnership Program and other NOAA programs have mission objectives that involve ocean exploration-related activity and technology development. The National Science Foundation, the Minerals Management Service and the Office of Naval Research have partnered with the Ocean Exploration Program in the past. Recent NOAA partners include: NOAA's National Undersea Research Program (NURP), NOAA Arctic Research Office, NOAA Fisheries Science Centers, and the NOAA Marine Sanctuary Program. OE places a high priority on proposed co-funded projects that receive high ratings through each agency's respective evaluation process. For additional details about these other programs, see: <http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/>.

### IV. Application and Submission Information

#### A. To Request Application Packages

Required cover sheets for Pre-proposals and Proposals are accessible through the OE Office web site at: <http://www.explore.noaa.gov/opportunity/welcome.html>. Hardcopies can also be obtained via mail at NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC 3, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, or requested by phone at (301) 713-9444.

Full proposal applications are available at <http://www.grants.gov/>. Applicants should submit the proposal coversheet, available at <http://www.explore.noaa.gov/opportunity/welcome.html> with their application through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). For applicants without internet access hardcopies of applications are available from the address above. Supplemental information regarding the standard NOAA grants documentation can be obtained at: <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html>.

#### B. Content and Form of Application

Pre-proposals are required for all submissions and should summarize the proposed research, identify project priorities, provide a statement of objectives, describe how the proposed project relates to OE=s mission, identify all major collaborators, and include a tabular budget. Applicants should also identify 1) clearly defined area of proposed operations (e.g., including latitude, longitude, and depth), 2) required platforms or other critical assets, 3) any auxiliary funding sources for the proposed project, 4) time or operational constraints, especially with regard to field operations, 5) past outputs (e.g. published papers, reports, meetings, and/or education and outreach material) from previous Ocean Exploration funding (if appropriate).

All pre-proposals must be typewritten on 8.5x11 inch paper in 12-point font. Pre-proposals may not exceed 2 pages to summarize the proposed research. Pre-proposals must include a completed pre-proposal cover sheet. The Principal Investigator=s last name must be typed in the bottom right-hand corner of each page. Three hard copies of the complete pre-proposal must be received by August 5, 2005. See Section IV.F. for hard copy submission information.

**Proposals:** Full proposals are required for all submissions and must be preceded by a pre-proposal. Full proposals must include the following, packaged in the order listed here with the bottom right-hand corner of every page, excluding cover sheet, numbered and labeled with the Principal Investigator=s last name. No appendices are permitted.

1. Completed proposal cover sheet (available electronically at: <http://www.explore.noaa.gov/opportunity/welcome.html>; Hardcopies can also be obtained via mail at NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC 3, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, or requested by phone at (301) 713-9444.

2. Maximum half-page executive summary: Describe the essential elements of the project being proposed. Include: 1) Title, 2) List of names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project, 3) Funding request for each year of the project as well as total funding requested, and 4) Concise statement of the objectives of the project, the scientific methodology to be used, and the rationale for the work proposed;

3. Maximum 15-page project description including all text and any tables and visual materials (such as charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations. Describe the rationale, methodology, and justification for the proposed science (i.e. What is the problem or issue being addressed? What is its scientific, technical, or socioeconomic importance? What are the goals, objectives, and anticipated approach of the proposed project? What capabilities do the partners possess that will benefit the project?). Identify project priorities, provide a statement of objectives, and describe how the proposed project relates with OE=s mission, Applicants should also identify 1) clearly defined area of proposed operations (e.g., including latitude, longitude, and depth), 2) required platforms or other critical assets, 3) any auxiliary funding sources for the proposed project, 4) responsibilities of each major participant, and 5) time or operational constraints, especially with regard to field operations. Proposals should also include a description and justification of data funding needs and explain how data will be made accessible or available to the public. The 15-page limit does not include the cover sheet, executive summary, budget and budget justification, literature citation, current and pending support, curriculum vitae, letters of commitment, and required forms.

4. Summary of results from past Ocean Exploration support (if applicable). List all publications as well as educational and outreach materials from past Ocean Exploration funding.

5. Summary of relevant current funding support: Applicants must provide information on all their current and pending Federal support for ongoing projects and proposals, including

potential subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The proposed project and all other projects or activities using Federal assistance or that requires a portion of time of the principal investigator or other senior personnel should be included. The relationship between the proposed project and these other projects should be described, and the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be stated.

6. Brief resumes for each investigator: two pages maximum for all Principal and Co-Principal Investigator(s) involved in carrying out the proposal, including recent relevant publication references;

7. Detailed tabular budget: Separate budgets within the single proposal must be provided if more than one funding action is anticipated (e.g., if funds are to be allocated to more than one institution or agency through subcontracts).

8. Budget narrative: (including justification for non-standard items as well as cost share/in-kind contribution); Detailed description of cost justifications.

9. Forms: The required forms are as follows:

- a. SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance (Rev July 2003). Please note that both the Principal Investigator and an administrative contact should be identified in Section 5 of the SF424 or Section 10. Applicants should enter A11.460" for the CFDA Number and ANOAA Special Oceanic and Atmospheric Projects@ for the title;
- b. SF-424A Budget Information - Nonconstruction Programs (Rev July 1997) There should be an annual budget for each year of the project as well as a cumulative budget for the entire project. Subcontracts should include a separate budget narrative page that itemizes all budget items in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested. (Please see the NOAA budget guidelines at <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html>);
- c. SF-424B Assurances - Nonconstruction Programs;
- d. SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities; (required if participating in Lobbying activities )
- e. CD-346 Application for Funding Assistance; (required for organizations other than Institutions of Higher Education)
- f. Form CD-511 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility matters: Drug-Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying,
- g. Form CD-512 Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion-Lower Tier Covered Transactions and Lobbying;
- h. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement - If applicable, please also submit your most current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement.

Proposals should be submitted through <http://www.grants.gov>. The following instructions apply to hard copy submissions for applicants without internet access. Hardcopy applications should be binder-clipped. Applications should not be bound or stapled and should be printed on one side only. Three hardcopies of the proposal are required (including three originals signed in blue ink). Since reviewers will have access to an electronic copy, it is highly recommended that applicants who submit a hardcopy application also submit a digital version with color graphics to best display their information and data. The digital version should be submitted (cdrom, floppy disk, or zip disk) preferably in Adobe.pdf format along with the three hardcopies.

### C. Submission Dates and Times

To insure that your application will be considered in the FY06 solicitation, it must be received by the dates listed below. Pre-proposals are required for all categories and should be received by August 5, 2005. Pre-proposals are a prerequisite for submission of a full proposal. Proposals are required for all categories and should be received by October 3, 2005. Applicants who submit a Pre-proposal by August 5, 2005 will receive an email encouraging or discouraging a full proposal submission by August 19, 2005.

For applications submitted through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov), a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy proposals will be date and time stamped when they are received in the program office. Proposals submitted after the above dates will not be reviewed. No email and/or facsimile pre-proposals and/or proposals submissions will be accepted.

#### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants must contact their State=s Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the State=s process under EO 12372. The names and addresses of the SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget=s website: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

#### E. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

#### F. Addresses for Application Submission

Pre-proposals must be submitted to: ATTN: Proposal Manager, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC III, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. Full proposals must be submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), except for those without internet access who may submit paper applications to the same address as pre-proposals.

### V. Application Review Information

#### A. Pre-Proposal Evaluation Criteria.

The OE Director in consultation with the program staff will make the decision to encourage or discourage full proposal submissions based on one or more of the following factors: (1) Applicability of the project objectives to OE mission and themes priorities (see Section I.A. Program & Notice Objectives and Section I.B. Program Priorities & Guidance); (2) Extent to which the pre-proposal focuses on a geographical area that is unknown or poorly known; (3) Reasonableness of project costs relative to available program funds; (4) Logistical feasibility (e.g., ship availability), given OE resource availability; (5) Consistency with the format of this announcement. The final decision to submit a full proposal is up to the applicant.

#### B. Full Proposal Evaluation Criteria.

Full proposals will be evaluated and rated individually by three or more independent peer panel reviewers. The evaluators will be composed of scientists, engineers, social scientists, economists, and resource managers as appropriate to the scope of proposals received in response to this announcement. The following criteria will be used to review proposals using the corresponding weight value:

##### 1. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals (20%):

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, international, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the OE review process this includes the degree to which the proposal addresses and supports OE=s mission and the objectives of this notice (see Section I.A. Program & Notice Objectives and Section I.B. Program Priorities & Guidance);

2. Scientific and Technical merit (40% for General Exploration and Marine Archaeology; 0 % for Education): This criterion assesses whether there are clear project goals and objectives; whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, and whether the methods are appropriate. For the OE review process this includes: a) the scientific and/or technical value of the work proposed, probability of success, and the applicant=s scientific and/or technical capabilities to undertake the proposed work; b) the anticipated scientific and/or technical impact of the results of the project on the advancement of knowledge within the field(s) of the endeavor;

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (20%): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the OE review process this includes the qualifications of the applicant to accomplish the work proposed as well as accomplishments from past OE funding, if applicable.

4. Project Costs (20%): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the OE review process this includes the reasonableness of project costs, including cost-share, relative to the scope of work proposed;

5. Outreach and Education (40% for Education ; 0% for General Exploration and Marine Archaeology): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nations natural resources.

All proposals will be rated by the independent peer reviewers or by correspondence reviewers according to an adjectival scale (that will later be converted into a score) ranging in order of decreasing merit, as follows:

Excellent: Comprehensive, thorough and of exceptional merit, one or more major strengths, no major weaknesses, and any minor weaknesses easily correctable.

Very Good: Competent, one or more major strengths, strengths outweigh weaknesses, and major weaknesses correctable.

Good: Reasonable, may be strengths and/or weaknesses, weaknesses do not significantly detract from the proposal=s viability, any major weaknesses are correctable.

Fair: One or more major weaknesses, weaknesses outweigh strengths, major weaknesses may possibly be corrected or minimized.

Poor: One or more major weaknesses, which will be difficult to correct or may not be correctable.

### C. Review and Selection Process

Once the full proposal is received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

If proposals are determined to be in compliance and complete, independent peer reviewers shall rate the individual proposals using the evaluation criteria and percentage weights provided above. Reviewers will provide individual evaluations of proposals, thus there will be no consensus advice. Both Federal and non-Federal experts in the field may be used in this process. The individual peer reviewer scores shall be averaged to produced a rank order to present to the Selecting Official (the OE Director). The Selecting Official will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the selection factors

below. Investigators may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets levels, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award.

#### D. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
  - A. Geographically
  - B. By type of institutions
  - C. By type of partners
  - D. By research areas
  - E. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors.
5. Applicants prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups.
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

Factor 2.A. includes ship availability. Factor 4 includes projects that are interdisciplinary and address cutting-edge scientific and technical approaches generally not definable by means of narrowly focused hypotheses. Factor 6 includes substantial collaborations with multiple institutions including government, academia, or industry.

#### E. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

OE will notify applicants whose proposals are not recommended for funding in writing, by postal mail or email approximately 120 days after the proposal deadline. These proposal will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of at least 12 months and then destroyed.

### VI. Award Administration Information

#### A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications may be either in hard copy or through electronic mail to the Authorizing Official.

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the collaboration duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement in the activities of each partnership will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants



Office, and the NOAA OE staff. Project activities should not be initiated in the expectation of federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

#### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Department of Commerce Requirements. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389) is applicable to this solicitation.

Limitation of Liability. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216--6--TOC.pdf>, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, [http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc\\_ceq.htm](http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm).

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

#### C. Reporting

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods that begin with the start date of the project. Progress reports are due either electronically or by mail directly to the NOAA Ocean Exploration program officer and are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award.

Progress reports should detail discoveries and collaborative activities that have occurred during the reporting period that correspond with the goals and objectives identified in the narrative, as well as provide specific, project-related information including financial reports.

### **VII. Agency Contact(s)**

For further information contact the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration at 301-713-9444 or submit inquiries via email to the Frequently Asked Questions address: [oar.oe.FAQ@noaa.gov](mailto:oar.oe.FAQ@noaa.gov). Email inquiries should include the Principal Investigator's name in the subject heading. Inquiries can be mailed to ATTN: Proposal Manager, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC III, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910